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DE RUEHDK #0775/01 1740811
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 230811Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2607
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0430
RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 000775

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, AND IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PU](#) [XY](#)

SUBJECT: U.S. ENDORSEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR
GUINEA-BISSAU ASSASSINATIONS INVESTIGATION

Classified By: Ambassador Marcia S. Bernicat for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) This is an action request. See paragraph 6 for action request to endorse UN Security Council support for a hybrid commission of inquiry for Guinea-Bissau.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: In response to the May 22 request from Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon (UNSYG) that the UN set up an international commission of inquiry to investigate the March assassinations of former President Joao Bernardo Vieira and former Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Batista Tagme Na Wai, UN officials are planning to propose instead that the international community provide technical assistance and political support to the Bissau-Guinean national commission of inquiry's ongoing investigation, thus creating a so-called "hybrid" commission of inquiry. END SUMMARY.

Guinea Bissau Requests International Commission of Inquiry

¶3. (SBU) On May 22, Prime Minister Gomes formally asked the United Nations to establish an international commission of inquiry into the March assassinations. Following the June 5 killings of Minister of Territorial Administration Baciro Dabo, National Assembly Deputy Helder Proenca and others as a result of an alleged coup plot, the GOGB publicly announced the request. According to UN Guinea-Bissau Desk Officer Denise O'Brien, the UN Secretariat is concerned that such a commission will be too costly, take too long to complete its work, and deflect responsibility for conducting the investigation and, as a result, stemming the violence from the GOGB to the international community. The UN Secretariat therefore supports deploying a large number of international technical advisors (e.g., police investigators and prosecutors) to Guinea-Bissau to aid in the investigation and compel, through their presence, the full cooperation of the armed forces. The plan also envisions a witness protection program and an international framework to aid in the prosecution of eventual detainees. The Secretary General, Special Representative to Guinea-Bissau, Joseph Mutaboba, will address the Security Council on June 23 and request UNSC endorsement of the plan.

Security Element for Commission

¶4. (C) In the aftermath of the March assassinations, Foreign Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed that a protection or stabilization force should be sent to Guinea-Bissau to maintain security during the presidential elections and SSR process. While initially supported by the Bissau-Guinean Foreign Minister, Prime Minister Gomes has since come out strongly against the idea. Most observers believe the civilian government's opposition is largely due to pressure being applied by and fear of

violence from the military. However, in light of the more recent killings, many believe that there might be a window of opportunity for convincing the government to accept some form of armed intervention force, if only to provide security for the hybrid commission of inquiry and protection for witnesses. Such a force, some observers believe, could pave the way for a larger stabilization force in support of security sector reform (SSR).

15. (C) COMMENT: The UN,s proposed "hybrid" commission of inquiry is the most creative and practical suggestion Post has heard of to date and may be the best hope for obtaining military cooperation in an investigation which will undoubtedly implicate a number of serving high-ranking officers, including in all likelihood the acting Deputy Chief of Staff, Antonio Indjai, who is widely suspected of having ordered men from his battalion to kill the former president. If done properly with vigorous international support, the &hybrid8 commission could serve as a beach head for broader SSR that would professionalize a military that is currently little more than a group of armed vigilantes and dominated by the Balanta ethnic group. An international security presence could also limit the military,s ability in the short term to continue its extra-judicial arrests and human rights violations. END COMMENT.

16. (SBU) ACTION REQUESTED: Post recommends that the Department instruct the U.S. Mission to the UN to endorse the provision of international investigative support and technical assistance to Guinea-Bissau (noting that the United States has already done so in the form of FBI assistance to the investigation) and the creation of a proposed "hybrid"

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commission of inquiry. Given the unwieldy nature of an international commission, the hybrid proposal offers a more realistic and practical approach to attempting to end the long cycle of killing with impunity in Guinea-Bissau. To that end, Embassy Dakar also recommends that USUN be instructed to request that the UN Secretariat evaluate the need for a security element (e.g., provided by UN, African Union or ECOWAS, perhaps with support from CPLP) for the proposed hybrid commission to protect its members, witnesses, and key members of government, including the president, prime minister, defense, interior and justice ministers, and attorney general.
BERNICAT